

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

Chairman David Obey  
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS,  
Education, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
2358 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Todd Tiahrt  
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS,  
Education, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
1016 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

April 3, 2009

Dear Chairman Obey and Ranking Member Tiahrt,

As you prepare the FY2010 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we are writing to support continued investment for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). We appreciate the significant support for IDEA contained in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and ask that IDEA remains a priority in FY10.

In 1975, the original version of IDEA was enacted to ensure that all students with disabilities receive a free and appropriate public education. At that time, the federal government made a pledge to states and school districts – by 1982, for every child receiving special education services the federal government would pay 40 percent of the National Average per Pupil Expenditure in IDEA Part B grants to states. In 2004, the reauthorization of IDEA reiterated this pledge, creating a “glide path” to reach the 40 percent commitment by 2011.

Over the past decade, the number of students receiving special education services has increased by nearly 20 percent. Yet until the passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the federal government has not come close to providing even half of its pledged investment in these children. ARRA included a historic \$12.2 billion increase in funding for IDEA, which will allow local education agencies avoid layoffs, obtain assistive technologies to enhance curriculum, provide professional development, and improve data systems. It is important to continue progress in the annual appropriations cycle.

In addition to funding for IDEA Part B grants to states, we also ask that you include significant funding for the Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities Program (Part C) and the IDEA Preschool Program (Part B, Section 619). Early intervention is vital to enhance development, assist families in meeting their child’s needs, and reducing long-term costs by minimizing the need for special education and maximizing independent living. Finally, we request additional investment in IDEA Part D, which provides critical supports to improve special education, including professional development to ensure that teachers and personnel are knowledgeable about best practices and qualified to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

When the federal government abdicates its responsibility to fund special education, states and local school districts must make up the difference. Inadequate federal investment forces states and local school districts to cut other areas of their budget to make up the special education shortfall, and affects the schools’ ability to provide quality services for all students. Federal funding for IDEA helps to relieve budget pressures and ensure improved educational opportunities for students with disabilities.

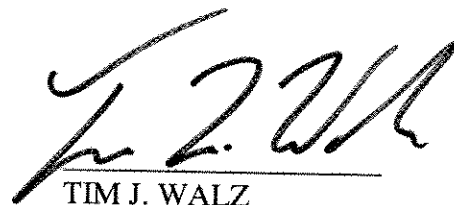
As we continue to require high standards for all our students, we have a responsibility to give states, schools, and students the resources they need. With proper support, we know that students with disabilities can make tremendous gains in the classroom. We should not deny their potential and miss the opportunity to secure the success of every student.

We urge you to work to honor our commitment to students with disabilities by including significant funding for IDEA in the Fiscal Year 2010 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriation bill.

Sincerely,

  
CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

  
TODD RUSSELL PLATTS

  
TIM J. WALZ

  
NEIL ABERCROMBIE

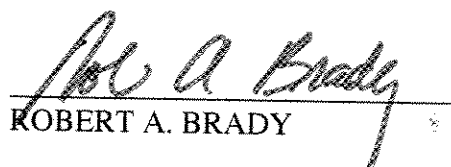
  
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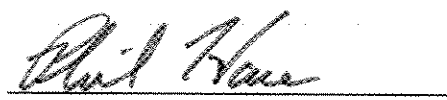
  
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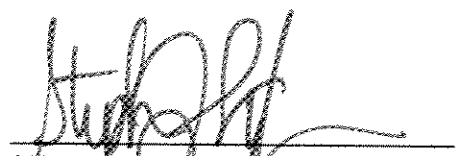
  
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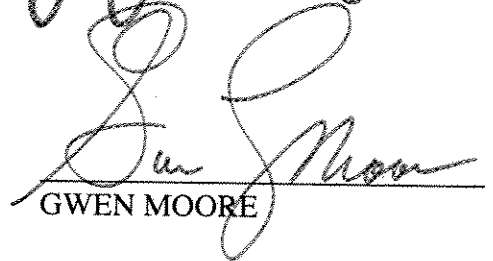
  
JIM McDERMOTT

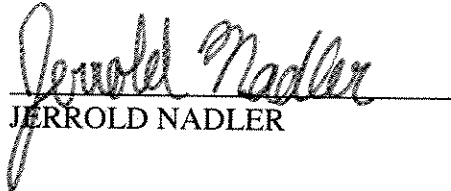
  
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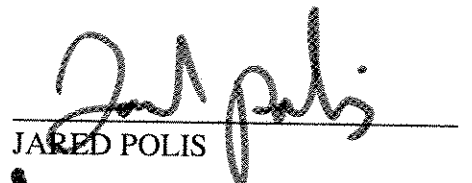
  
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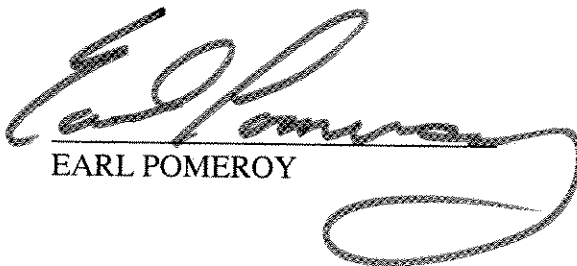
  
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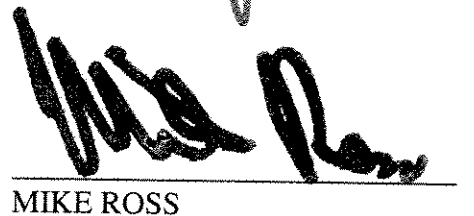
  
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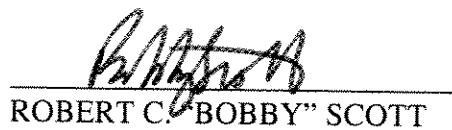
  
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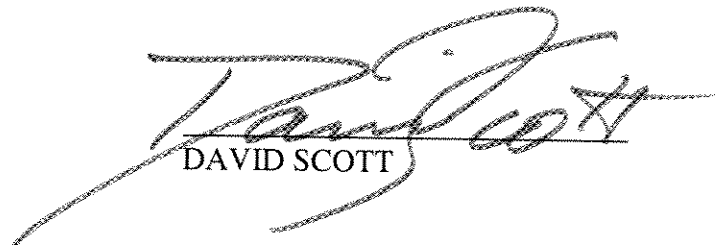
  
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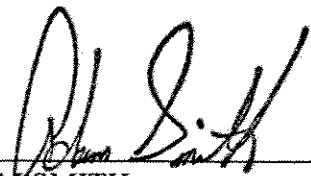
  
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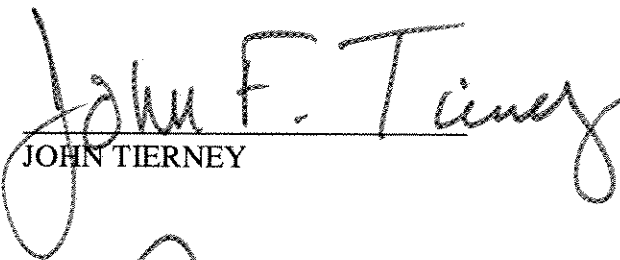
  
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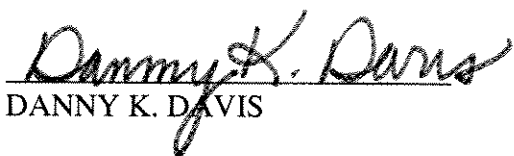
  
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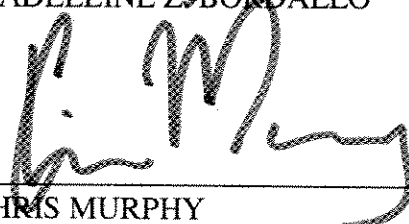
  
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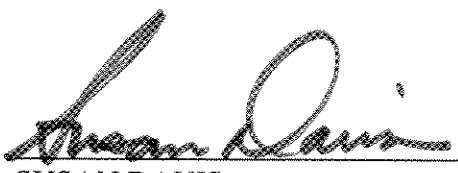
  
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